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## **THE WORD**

**You set your body free  
by doing this,  
                    a word  
spoken to the thigh alone  
by some book you far  
are reading on your lap.**

**But the skin hears  
and tells the bone  
to explain it to the brain,  
for the bone is naught if not  
a Roman highway to the capital,  
an aqueduct of living water,  
a cathedral on the march.**

**Little by little all the body hears  
and smiles, I swear it, the body smiles  
in an all-forgiving way, but you,  
you're too busy reading to notice anything.**

**So it takes matters into its own hands,  
the book slips from your fingers,  
  sleep**

**knows you and time passes  
undisturbed by busybody consciousness.**

**This is the law of skin, an old word  
that once meant shine, the beauty  
of us gleaming out on all sides.**

**12 November 2014**

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*for C*

**Anybody can understand  
what I'm saying.**

**Only you  
understand why I'm saying it.**

**12 November 2014**

## **AURUM**

**When gold was still a metal  
a princess knew her job:  
impersonate the prince and drive  
the paynim from the land.  
But who were they?**

**Paynim meant pagans, pagans meant  
the people of the land, who lived  
believing in the power and sanctity  
of everything they touched, lived  
glad under the dome of the sky  
no man had ever touched or ever will.  
They worshipped everything they saw  
and some few things they never could  
except sometimes on autumn evenings  
something pale through wheat fields  
or passing through the changing trees.**

**If there were no pagans  
there would be no land, no harvest, so why  
would anyone want to get rid of them?**

**So she impersonated a priest instead  
and baptized them all**

with some special water that she knew  
and she alone, baptized them  
in the name of some idea that  
at that moment happened to her mind.  
So now all the people were still people,  
her people, smiling and making love and dying  
the way honest people should.

Now she  
could go back to being princess  
and use the prince instead  
for some of the few things princes  
sometimes are good for,  
it all depends,

but they sat too, at evening,  
drinking that same water  
from a cup of gold—  
a bright,  
yellowish, massive metal  
that keeps its nature even when alloyed,  
a color that resists corrosion.

13 November 2014

**[for *Traubenritter* n.s.]**

**=====**

**I watched an albatross once. A stuffed bird, huge wings spread wide, it hung on wires from the shadowy ceiling of a museum far from any southern ocean, cleverly suspended as if in flight. Am I like this bird, a presentable replica of some self I pretend to be? Or once was?**

**13 November 2014**

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**When you've come to the middle  
you're done. Or home. Or who  
are you when you travel  
if not the destination itself, on your soft  
wounded feet making its long  
journey to itself? That's what pilgrimage is,  
the holy places coming back to themselves,  
using all your striving to renew themselves  
again and remember what they mean.**

**14 November 2014**



## **TRAVELER**

**Only your shadow moves.  
You are still home  
dreading of the cold  
altars of Rome, the blood  
soaked altars of Yucatan.  
There is no way to  
leave where you are.**

**14 November 2014  
[15.XI.14]**

## **AVIAN**

**1.**

**No fruit on any tree  
just birds  
they console the empty spaces  
leaves left—  
they cheer the cold sky.**

**2.**

**Why does every bird  
alone or in company  
remind me of myself  
sitting still, moveless, slow?**

**3.**

**Its existence is swift  
absolute ardent,  
gone. We too  
elapse in perpetuity.  
The paradox  
of leaving names behind.**

**4.**

**Or are they too  
waiting for the sky to open  
waiting for something  
something else?**

**14 November 2014**

**= = = = =**

**And if a cloud fell  
and if a man rose  
or a rose in the snow  
melted all the winter  
and the earth answered?**

**14 November 2014**

**= = = = =**

**Brown paper bag  
soon be are thing  
or sack they call it  
in Montana, brown  
paper brown paper  
you make me a kid  
again watching  
watching the grocery man  
adding up numbers  
fast on the bag, so black  
his pencil, bill and  
parcel all at once.  
How can there even  
be numbers without  
brown paper bags?**

**14 November 2014**

## ENDANGER'D PASTORAL

Be as often as it could and still be mine  
it went asunder in the fractured storm,  
for lightning breaks the scheme apart  
that had been planning at us all the while  
till the Discharge spoke, and for a second  
earth was heaven. Then the rain came by.

Channels grow evident. Misfired kingdoms  
sweltering sultanates abaft dull tropic gulfs  
gasping for more oil. *Kokospalme*, he said,  
this tree imagines me. Bougainvillea scarlet,  
bougainvillea purple, two adolescents found  
merciful hiding place behind the flowers.

Could you be mine too, each asked the shadow  
and the darkness answered each of them  
*the sun is the darkest thing there ever is —  
so be afraid.* They clutched each other  
like nursery rhymes, tongues in each other's  
lips for safe keeping. Fear is what loves you

best, of all your trivial anxieties, this greedy  
explanation takes most of the world away,  
all those captivating differences and only one  
fear to handle all of them. Breath stuck in throat,  
heart trying one more time to escape from out

**the prison of your ribcage. Relax now, let me.**

**Let me. Let me. And then you will be you  
all over again and I'll be you too, nowhere  
any me to be found in all that wilderness  
of beaver and Beethoven, in the forest of names  
every child is lost forever. An adult tumbles  
out, grappling for breath. A glass of silence.**

**An architecture of pure air. The skin of elsewhere.**

**14 November 2014**

## **AMONG SUCH SPARROWS**

**At some moment turn back  
bitter-gourd and none besides,  
leach the sugar out of sweetest blood  
o Isles of Langerhans fat children dread  
menaced with that pox jejune anxiety,**

**eat a banana! The only thing that kills you  
is your fate. Do angels ever eat?  
I rest my case. Raunchy specimens  
those smaller birds, can't ever tell  
what they're really up to, or even me.**

**15 November 2014**



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**I too am exiled among daydreams  
far-away consonants, pagodas slipping by,  
the oily world of doing grinds to a halt  
clogged with the grit of Being here—  
but I crave a number different from you ten.**

**How many syllables to spell your will?  
Go off to a planet with thirteen fingers,  
dynamics of an asteroid don't make a better man,  
sea foam and appetite, though, all love from them—  
a young woman at a neap hour impersonates the sea.**

**Is that far enough or even true, or is  
there a curse on this mere number?  
In France white numerals on blue tin  
mark each house that eats its mail,  
consumer, fireplace, lilac barren as November**

**but then we came home, no need to know  
no place I want to go, don't let them come here  
with their doorbells and godless telephones—  
thus he spake, and sailed to Ithaca yet again  
to test the curing waters of the narrow lake.**

**Frankly I'm glad he was gone, the likes of me  
need truer dreams to stand all smiles beneath  
the garlic tree, the stairs go nowhere but up!  
The stars suspend their influence, a needle  
teases out a vein and the youngest nurse cries Yes!**

**They test the eye by staring at a distant E  
so test the mind by thinking of the furthest thing  
and what is that, my love? The E at Delphi  
Plutarch puzzled over and Kelly solved?  
Not at all. The furthest thing, a moment just past?**

**Past and future just sad imaginings — you need  
an actual object on which to fix the mind.  
Then it must be the mind itself, the E  
on the eye-chart stands for Eye, the mind  
beholds itself remotely and only for an instant**

**but in that moment it understands.**

**15 November 2014**

**= = = = =**

**Exaggerate the obvious  
till it incandesces with strange light**

**like a woman walking her dog  
across the parking lot**

**but there is no dog but you can see  
in her heart her need for a dog**

**and that has to be enough, one more  
quarry in an endless hunt**

**for what we think we need.  
We want things. And are prepared**

**to be grateful to the ones that love us  
even to the point of loving them back.**

**She gets younger as she comes closer,  
a girl with no dog in a lot with no cars.**

**[15 November 2014]**

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**Clueless we prosper.  
So be warm to me as weather  
or of all forms be wheel.  
The sun is getting ready to set  
slowly, like an aged aunt  
packing her steamer trunk  
for a questionable vacation.  
Iguaçu. Istanbul. Please.  
Take me with you. I am praying  
like a child. Like sunshine.  
Like a wheel.**

**[15 November 2014]**